

Castlemaine Naturalist

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Monthly newsletter of the
Castlemaine Field Naturalists Club Inc.



Yam daisies – *Microseris* sp. photo - Noel Young

Cup Day Excursion to Fryers Ridge Rita Mills

The weather wasn't exactly promising early, but the ceiling lifted enough for me to decide it was worth the risk. Anyway, I had a raincoat and my hat which helped keep the cold wind and a couple of showers out/off. We met up with Richard Piesse and several others, from anywhere between Taradale and Melbourne, when we got to Taradale.

Once we got into the bush my driver and I had trouble concentrating on where we were going, and doubtless, everyone else was doing the same thing, so it was as well that Richard knew just where he was going, because I have never seen the bush in such good condition. We kept seeing swathes of Sticky Everlastings, various peas, thousands of Wax-lip Orchids, nearly as many Caladenias, Hooded and Musky, wattles, tea-tree, and we just kept going! but Richard had a special treat for us at one of his favourite sites near the Old Fire Tower (or its ghost; the fire tower itself was taken down years ago).

We actually arrived in time to have our lunch, but *first*.... we had to check out the Spider Orchids and the beautiful Dwarf Bush-pea *Pultenea humilis* with its soft furry leaves and red/brown flowers. Lunch was being forgotten as more and more treasures were found.

After lunch (yes, we finally succumbed) Richard led us along an old 4WD track, and still we kept finding more delights, including Wattle and Many-flowered Mat-rushes which were flowering better than anyone had ever seen them, and just before we turned back we found another one which still needs to be identified.

Some people had to head off by about 3 o'clock, but the rest of us followed to where Richard and a companion had identified a rather tall leek orchid a week or so before. We drove down some rather rutted tracks, and then had to walk a couple of hundred yards, but it was very worthwhile. Not yet in flower, but close to it, and probably just waiting for a sunny day, was a specimen, not of leek orchid, but of the Giant Sun-orchid, the first I had seen in about 30 years. The last ones

that I had seen were in the Taradale/Metcalf bush and all five had been dug up by a collector. It is very doubtful if they survived. So this one was a very special thrill for me, for all of us I think. We found violets, both the rarer Long Leafed Violet *Viola betonicifolia*, and the Ivy-leafed violet, *V. hederacea*, on that track, too.

My driver and I added a few more species in flower as we headed out on a very rough track, finishing up near Fryerstown - after clearing the top of a small tree across the track. Just as well it was small enough to break the branches, because I don't think we would have been very successful removing it with Muriel's little folding handsaw if it had been like some of the bigger ones we had seen fallen during the drive.

In all, Muriel and I had a list of 57 plants in flower for the day. Thank you so much for sharing it with us, Richard.

Our list for the day;- Before the old fire tower site - Heath Milkwort. In the old fire tower area - Hooded and Musky Caladenia, Mantis Greencomb Spider Orchid, Common Onion Orchid, Wax-lip Orchid, *Thelymitra pauciflora*, *T. carnea*, *T. antennifera*, *T. flexuosa*, Yam Daisy, Handsome Flat-pea, still a few flowers, Fairy, (or Bendigo) Wax, White Marianth, *Pultenea humilis*, *Goodenia blackiana*, Hedge Wattle, Thin-leaf Wattle *Acacia aculeatissima*, Rough and Woolly Wattles, Daphne Heath, Common, Twin-flower and Pink Beard-heaths, Tall Rice-flower, *Tetratheca ciliata*, *Gompholobium huegelii* (here you can find specimens from pale greenish yellow to bright yellow), Candles, Hoary Sunray, Black-anther Flax-lily, Chocolate Lily, Milkmaids, Tall Sundew, *Grevillea alpina*, red and yellow form, *Luzula* species, Billy Buttons, Bundled Guinea-flower, Silky Teatree *Leptospermum myrsinoides*, *Senecio vulgaris*, Wattle, Many-flowered and another Mat-rush species, and Broad-leaf Peppermint.

Added at the second stop - Silky Parrot Pea, *Viola betonicifolia*, *V. hederacea*, Variable Plantain, Bulbine Lily, *Galium gaudichaudii*, and, of course, Giant Sun-orchid *Thelymitra aristata*. On the way there - Nodding Rice-flower.

Muriel Sovar and self - *Pultenea daphnoides*, Tall Greenhood *Pterostylis melagramma*, Diggers Speedwell, Nodding Chocolate Lily *Arthropodium fimbriatum*, Matted Bush-pea.

Flowering plants on recent excursions

Needless to say, the breaking of the long drought has resulted in an exceptional proliferation of wildflowers this spring, and Richard Piesse has been busy compiling lists from his many excursions. We can't print them all, but for the sake of permanent reference, here are the lists for the local area. He also compiled a list of 58 flowering plants on a visit to **Riddells Creek Reserves** – Birrin Birrin and Conglomerate Gully, which he recommends for a November club outing next year.

Richard also commented on recent plant surveys with Ern and Lesley in the Smiths Reef and Muckleford Forests during October 2010 "A number of plants rarely seen during the many drought years just passed have appeared for the sharp eyes to pick up. Among these are: Small Gnat-orchid, Bearded Greenhood, Slender Onion-orchid, and Lanky Buttons. Another excellent flowering plant this year is *Lomandra multiflora*"

Final Wildflower Walk on 13th October, Kalimna Ridge

some of the plants in flower were:

<i>Arthropodium strictum</i>	Chocolate lily
<i>Burchardia umbellata</i>	Milkmaids
<i>Dianella admixta</i>	Black-anther Flax-lily
<i>Wurmbea dioica</i>	Common Early Nancy
<i>Caladenia phaeoclavia</i>	Brown-clubbed Spider-orchid
<i>Calochilus robertsonii</i>	Purple Beard-orchid
<i>Diuris pardina</i>	Leopard Orchid
<i>Glossodia major</i>	Wax-lip Orchid
<i>Lomandra multiflora</i>	Many flowered Mat-rush
<i>Craspedia variabilis</i>	Billy Buttons
<i>Microseris</i> sp 3	Yam Daisy
<i>Ozothamnus obcordatus</i>	Grey Everlasting
<i>Drosera peltata</i> ssp <i>auriculata</i>	Tall Sundew
<i>Brachyloma daphnoides</i>	Daphne Heath
<i>Melichrus urceolatus</i>	Urn Heath
<i>Daviesia leptophylla</i>	Narrow-leaf Bitter-pea
<i>Daviesia ulicifolia</i>	Gorse Bitter-pea
<i>Dillwynia sericea</i>	Showy Parrot-pea
<i>Hardenbergia violacea</i>	Purple Coral-pea
<i>Goodenia blackiana</i>	Black's Goodenia
<i>Prostanthera denticulata</i>	Rough Mint-bush
<i>Acacia acinacea</i>	Gold-dust Wattle
<i>Acacia aspera</i>	Rough Wattle
<i>Acacia genistifolia</i>	Spreading Wattle
<i>Acacia paradoxa</i>	Hedge Wattle
<i>Eucalyptus polyanthemus</i>	Red Box
<i>Rhytidosporem procumbens</i>	White Marianth
<i>Bursaria spinosa</i> ssp <i>spinosa</i>	Sweet Bursaria
<i>Grevillea alpina</i>	Downy Grevillea
<i>Philotheca verrucosa</i>	Fairy Wax-flower
<i>Pimelia humilis</i>	Common Rice-flower
<i>Tetratheca ciliata</i>	Pink Bells



Brachyloma daphnoides

17th October 2010 on the Friends of the Box Ironbark Forests walk -

Kangaroo Creek area, eastern Fryers Range forest

<i>Luzula meridionalis</i> sp.	Common Wood-rush
<i>Arthropodium strictum</i>	Chocolate lily
<i>Burchardia umbellata</i>	Milkmaids
<i>Thysanotus patersonii</i>	Twining fringe-lily
<i>Wurmbea dioica</i>	Common Early Nancy
<i>Caladenia carnea</i>	Pink Fingers
<i>Caladenia gracilis</i>	Musky Hood
<i>Caladenia phaeoclavia</i>	Brown-clubbed Spider-orchid
<i>Chiloglottis valida</i>	Common Bird-orchid
<i>Diuris pardina</i>	Leopard Orchid
<i>Glossodia major</i>	Wax-lip Orchid
<i>Prasophyllum affin odoratum</i>	Scented Leak-orchid (in bud)
<i>Pterostylis melagramma</i>	Tall Greenhood
<i>Pterostylis nutans</i>	Nodding Greenhood



Lomandra multiflora

<i>Thelymitra aristata</i>	Great Sun-orchid (in bud)
<i>Lomandra filiformis</i>	Wattle Mat-rush
<i>Lomandra longifolia</i>	Spiny-headed Mat-rush
<i>Craspedia variabilis</i>	Billy Buttons
<i>Microseris</i> sp	Yam Daisy
<i>Senecio phelleus</i>	Slender Groundsel
<i>Xerochrysum viscosum</i>	Sticky Everlasting
<i>Drosera peltata</i> ssp <i>auriculata</i>	Tall Sundew
<i>Epacris impressa</i>	Common Heath
<i>Leucopogon virgatus</i>	Common Beard-heath
<i>Daviesia leptophylla</i>	Narrow-leaf Bitter-pea
<i>Daviesia ulicifolia</i>	Gorse Bitter-pea
<i>Hardenbergia violacea</i>	Purple Coral-pea
<i>Platylobium formosum</i>	Handsome Flat-pea
<i>Pultenea pedunculata</i>	Matted Bush-pea
<i>Goodenia blackiana</i>	Black's Goodenia
<i>Gonocarpus tetragynus</i>	Common Raspwort
<i>Ajuga australis</i>	Austral Bugle
<i>Acacia acinacea</i>	Gold-dust Wattle
<i>Acacia aculeatissima</i>	Thin-leaf Wattle
<i>Acacia aspera</i>	Rough Wattle
<i>Acacia lanigera</i>	Woolly Wattle
<i>Acacia melanoxylon</i>	Blackwood
<i>Acacia paradoxa</i>	Hedge Wattle
<i>Eucalyptus polyanthemos</i>	Red Box
<i>Grevillea alpina</i>	Downy Grevillea
<i>Grevillea obtecta</i>	Fryerstown Grevillea
<i>Philotheca verrucosa</i>	Fairy Wax-flower
<i>Stackhousia monogyna</i>	Creamy Candles
<i>Pimelia humilis</i>	Common Rice-flower
<i>Tetralathea ciliata</i>	Pink Bells
<i>Viola betonicifolia</i>	Showy Violet
<i>Viola hederacea</i>	Ivy-leaf Violet

3rd November 2010 - Taradale Club walk along the Tourist Railway – Castlemaine to Maldon

<i>Arthropodium strictum</i>	Chocolate lily
<i>Bulbine bulbosa</i>	Bulbine Lily
<i>Burchardia umbellata</i>	Milkmaids
<i>Dianella admixta</i>	Black-anther Flax-lily
<i>Caladenia cucullata</i>	Hood Orchid
<i>Caladenia gracilis</i>	Musky Hood
<i>Caladenia dilatata</i>	Greencomb Spider Orchid
<i>Calochilus robertsonii</i>	Purple Beard-orchid
<i>Diuris sulphurea</i>	Tiger Orchid
<i>Glossodia major</i>	Wax-lip Orchid
<i>Microtis unifolia</i>	Common Onion Orchid
<i>Pterostylis melagramma</i>	Tall Greenhood
<i>Thelymitra pauciflora</i>	Slender Sun-orchid
<i>Thelymitra rubra</i>	Salmon Sun-orchid
<i>Lomandra filiformis</i>	Wattle Mat-rush
<i>Brachyscome multifida</i>	Cut-leaf Daisy



Thelymitra aristata.



<i>Chrysocephalum apiculatum</i>	Common Everlasting
<i>Chrysocephalum semipapposum</i>	Clustered Everlasting
<i>Craspedia variabilis</i>	Billy Buttons
<i>Leptorhynchos squamatus</i>	Scaly Buttons
<i>Leucochrysum albicans</i>	Hoary Sunray
<i>Microseris</i> sp 3	Yam Daisy
<i>Ozothamnus obcordatus</i>	Grey Everlasting
<i>Podolepis jaceoides</i>	Showy Podolepis
<i>Senecio phelleus</i>	Slender Groundsel
<i>Xerochrysum viscosum</i>	Sticky Everlasting
<i>Wahlenbergia stricta</i>	Tall Bluebell
<i>Hibbertia exutiacies</i>	Spiky Guinea-flower
<i>Brachyloma daphnoides</i>	Daphne Heath
<i>Leucopogon virgatus</i>	Common Beard-heath
<i>Daviesia leptophylla</i>	Narrow-leaf Bitter-pea
<i>Dillwynia hispida</i>	Red Parrot-pea
<i>Dillwynia sericea</i>	Showy Parrot-pea
<i>Pultenea largiflorens</i>	Twiggy Bush-pea
<i>Pultenea pedunculata</i>	Matted Bush-pea
<i>Geranium affin solanderi</i>	Austral Crane's-bill
<i>Goodenia blackiana</i>	Black's Goodenia
<i>Velleia paradoxa</i>	Spur Velleia
<i>Gonocarpus tetragynus</i>	Common Raspwort
<i>Acacia acinacea</i>	Gold-dust Wattle
<i>Acacia aspera</i>	Rough Wattle
<i>Acacia paradoxa</i>	Hedge Wattle
<i>Acacia pycnantha</i>	Golden Wattle
<i>Calytrix tetragona</i>	Common Fringe-myrtle
<i>Eucalyptus polyanthemus</i>	Red Box
<i>Leptospermum myrsinoides</i>	Heath Tea-tree
<i>Bursaria spinosa</i> ssp <i>spinosa</i>	Sweet Bursaria
<i>Rhytidosporum procumbens</i>	White Marianth
<i>Grevillea alpina</i>	Downy Grevillea
<i>Philotheca verrucosa</i>	Fairy Wax-flower
<i>Dodonaea viscosa</i> sp.	Hop-bush
<i>Stackhousia monogyna</i>	Creamy Candles
<i>Stylidium ameria</i>	Grass Trigger-plant
<i>Pimelia humilis</i>	Common Rice-flower
<i>Pimelia linifolia</i>	Slender Rice-flower



Microtis unifolia

[All photographs in this issue are by Noel Young]

Riddells Creek Reserves – Birrin Birrin and Conglomerate Gully Richard Piesse, 17th November

This is another excellent locality for a club outing

<i>Juncus australis</i>	Austral Rush
<i>Arthropodium strictum</i>	Chocolate lily
<i>Burchardia umbellata</i>	Milkmaids
<i>Dianella admixta</i>	Black-anther Flax-lily
<i>Caladenia carnea</i>	Pink Fingers
<i>Caladenia gracilis</i>	Musky Hood
<i>Calochilus robertsonii</i>	Purple Beard-orchid
<i>Chiloglottis valida</i>	Common Bird-orchid
<i>Diuris sulphurea</i>	Tiger Orchid
<i>Prasophyllum brevilabre</i>	Short-lip Leak-orchid



<i>Lomandra filiformis</i>	Wattle Mat-rush
<i>Lomandra longifolia</i>	Spiny-headed Mat-rush
<i>Xanthorrhoea australis</i>	Austral Grass-tree
<i>Cassinia aculeata</i>	Common Cassinia
<i>Chrysocephalum apiculatum</i>	Common Everlasting
<i>Chrysocephalum baxteri</i>	White Everlasting
<i>Chrysocephalum semipapposum</i>	Clustered Everlasting
<i>Craspedia variabilis</i>	Billy Buttons
<i>Cymbonotus preissianus</i>	Austral Bear's-ear
<i>Helichrysum scorpioides</i>	Button Everlasting
<i>Lagenophora huegelii</i>	Coarse Bottle-daisy
<i>Leptorhynchus squamatus</i>	Scaly Buttons
<i>Microseris</i> sp 3	Yam Daisy
<i>Olearia lirata</i>	Snowy Daisy-bush
<i>Olearia myrsinoides</i>	Silky Daisy-bush
<i>Ozothamnus obcordatus</i>	Grey Everlasting
<i>Senecio odoratus</i>	Scented Groundsel
<i>Senecio phelleus</i>	Slender Groundsel
<i>Xerochrysum viscosum</i>	Sticky Everlasting
<i>Brunonia australis</i>	Blue Pincushion
<i>Wahlenbergia gracilis</i>	Sprawling Bluebell
<i>Wahlenbergia stricta</i>	Tall Bluebell
<i>Stellaria pungens</i>	Prickly Starwort
<i>Drosera peltata</i>	Tall Sundew
<i>Leucopogon virgatus</i>	Common Beard-heath
<i>Dillwynia sericea</i>	Showy Parrot-pea
<i>Geranium</i> sp 2	Variable Crane's-bill
<i>Goodenia ovata</i>	Hop Goodenia
<i>Gonocarpus tetragynus</i>	Common Raspwort
<i>Ajuga australis</i>	Austral Bugle
<i>Acacia paradoxa</i>	Hedge Wattle
<i>Eucalyptus dives</i>	Broad-leaved Peppermint
<i>Oxalis</i> spp	Wood Sorrel
<i>Billardiera mutabilis</i>	Apple-berry
<i>Rhytidosporum procumbens</i>	White Marianth
<i>Plantago varia</i>	Variable Plantain
<i>Comesperma volubile</i>	Love Creeper
<i>Grevillea alpina</i>	Downy Grevillea
<i>Galium gaudichaudii</i>	Rough Bedstraw
<i>Opercularia varia</i>	Variable Stinkweed
<i>Veronica calycina</i>	Hairy Speedwell
<i>Stackhousia monogyna</i>	Creamy Candles
<i>Stylidium ameriea</i>	Grass Trigger-plant
<i>Stylidium graminifolium</i>	Grass Trigger-plant
<i>Pimelia humilis</i>	Common Rice-flower
<i>Pimelia linifolia</i>	Slender Rice-flower
<i>Viola hederacea</i>	Ivy-leaf Violet
<i>Luzula meridionalis</i>	Common Wood-rush



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**Don't forget – the February meeting is an Annual General Meeting – think about nominating for Committee. Don't leave all the work to a few. And to liven up proceedings our guest speaker will be Mr Laurie Levy, the scourge of all duck hunters! Have a great Christmas**  
 - ED

## **Vale Maggie Oliver**

Those club members who knew Maggie were sad to hear of her passing on November 11<sup>th</sup>, and send very sincere condolences to her far-flung family – brothers, nieces and nephews who live all over Australia.

Maggie was born in Balranald in 1924 and grew up there until she left to do her nursing training in Melbourne. She became a skilled practitioner and worked overseas in very interesting and challenging situations for a number of years. Her love of country life brought her finally to Castlemaine, and she took up the position of Matron of the Maldon Hospital. Maggie then joined a number of community groups, and Castlemaine Field Naturalists became one of her favourites, while we felt very fortunate that she had become a member.

What a wonderful member she was - always enthusiastic about club projects, and ready to take on a number of positions – at various times she was secretary, committee member, the person who took charge of the supper arrangements, and spent some years sending out the newsletters. She was a very keen bird watcher, and rarely left home without her binoculars, bird book and thermos!

She instigated the Annual Dawn Breakfast – some of us groaned at the very thought, but no excuse was allowed – we must be in the bush at the chosen spot by dawn, in order to hear the dawn chorus at its best – after which we could tuck into our breakfast.

Maggie loved camping in the bush, and a number of members will have very happy memories of some delightful trips with her. We'll miss her – particularly when afternoon tea is announced on club trips, and those thermoses are produced.

Phee Broadway

**The SEANA Autumn Camp will be at Anglesea next year -  
25<sup>th</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2011 Hosted by ANGAIR Inc**  
Further information: ANGAIR Inc PO Box 12 Anglesea 3230  
telephone: 03 5263 1085 email: admin@angair.com.au

## **Observations**

- ◆ Flock of Blue faced Honeyeaters seen in the railway station palms, and Grey headed Flying Fox in Wheeler St. - Chris Timewell
- ◆ Denis Hurley noted two Sacred Kingfishers in the local creek, and Leaden Flycatchers nesting.
- ◆ A juvenile Owlet Nightjar found in a tree stump in the garden – Dianne Thompson
- ◆ Tiger Orchids at McKenzie Hill – Jan Hall
- ◆ Purple crowned Lorikeets in Yellow Box at Barkers Ck – Geoff Harris
- ◆ Comments were made about the number of “anomalous” white flowers seen lately, including Sun-orchids, Dianella, and Chocolate Lily
- ◆ Rita had a noisy week as two flocks of Magpies amalgamated under the local “alpha male”. Their song is now changing. Recently she reported a rare plant, the Rough Starhair along the railway line.
- ◆ George Broadway saw a fox apparently being chased by a Black Wallaby in Etty St.
- ◆ Richard Piesse recently saw a flock of Yellow tailed Black Cockatoos in Sunshine – an unusual occurrence

## **CASTLEMAINE FIELD NATURALIST'S CLUB SPEAKER LIST FOR 2011**

|           |                  |                      |
|-----------|------------------|----------------------|
| February  | LAURIE LEVY      | Duck hunting         |
| March     | JULIAN HOLLIS    | Local geology        |
| April     | DEBBIE WORLAND   | Swift Parrots        |
| May       | RICHARD RETALLIC |                      |
| June      | NATASHA SCHEDVIN | Barking Owls         |
| July      | EUAN MOORE       | Birding in Sri Lanka |
| August    | CRAIG GRABHAM    | Bats                 |
| September | PAUL HORNE       | Insects              |
| October   | MIKE WESTON      | Bird topic of choice |
| November  | GEOFF CARR       | Dianella             |



## A local Bird Survey

### Noel Young

On 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> November I had the pleasure of hosting a couple of old friends from Geelong. While a bird list was the focus, they were also interested in the wildflowers, so although our attention was divided, we seemed to be lucky with bird sightings and ended up with a list of over 50 species. Though it was too late for the best of the flowers (many seemed to have been finished off by the wet/cold spell of the previous week) we still found some interesting spots, especially at the Expedition Pass reservoir where we began. With the Bird Challenge Count in mind, I followed some of our usual route, taking in Chinaman's Point, Troll corner and south as far as the Fryerstown cemetery.

The following day we headed west, taking in the Kalimna ridge, botanical gardens (where the Powerful Owl was the highlight), the Muckleford golf course (where we managed to grab photos of White bellied Cuckoo-shrikes tending to at least one chick in a nest), Maldon, Smiths Reef dam (Australasian Grebes nesting with chicks) and finishing at the Gowar school, where we watched a pair of Black faced Cuckoo-shrikes feeding chicks in a high nest. It will be interesting to compare the first day with the count on December 4<sup>th</sup>.



Total List for both days

|                    |                     |                      |                             |
|--------------------|---------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|
| Grey Fantail       | Rufous Whistler     | Superb Blue Wren     | White browed Scrubwren      |
| Reed Warbler       | Eastern Swamphe     | Little Raven         | White throated Treecreeper  |
| Yellow Robin       | Olive backed Oriole | Brown Thornbill      | Yellow tufted Honeyeater    |
| Spotted Pardalote  | Striated Pardalote  | Yellow rumped T'bill | White naped Honeyeater      |
| Fantail Cuckoo     | Dusky Woodswallow   | Blackbird            | Yellow faced Honeyeater     |
| Grey Shrike-thrush | Welcome Swallow     | Aust Goshawk         | Black faced Cuckoo-shrike   |
| Crimson Rosella    | Pink Robin (female) | Red Wattlebird       | White bellied Cuckoo-shrike |
| Pacific Black Duck | Brown Treecreeper   | Starling             | White plumed Honeyeater     |
| Willy Wagtail      | Wood Duck           | Magpie               | Fuscous Honeyeater          |
| Eastern Rosella    | Long billed Corella | Powerful Owl         | Horsfield's Bronze Cuckoo   |
| Kookaburra         | Mudlark             | Tree Martin          | White winged Chough         |
| Peaceful Dove      | Australasian Grebe  | White faced Heron    | New Holland Honeyeater      |
| Musk Lorikeet      | Crested Shrike-tit  | Galah                | White eared Honeyeater      |

## A trip to the Main Range, Southern Queensland

Noel Young

In the September issue I wrote about my stay during August in Brisbane. While there, we took a couple of trips into the country, one of which was to the south and inland where the Great Divide crosses the border into NSW.



Main Range National Park is part of the so called “scenic rim” which refers to the rim of rugged cliffs and bluffs along the border area, which are all associated with widespread volcanic rocks, from Mt Warning in the east to Cunninghams Gap area on the Main Range. Geology is the primary cause of all landforms, and the spectacular appearance of this area is no exception. The widespread volcanic activity which occurred approx. 25 million years ago, is interpreted as a large shield volcano (think of the large island of the Hawaiian chain) where lava flows coursed down broad slopes and over some three million years formed a low dome covering hundreds of square kilometres. Like Hawaii, the cause is interpreted as a sub-crustal hot spot which in this case, manifested activity when the drifting crust slowed down for a time as it changed direction, allowing heat to build up as a magma chamber.

Today what we see as spectacular scenery is the result of 25 million years of erosion, which has bitten huge chunks out of the hard basaltic shield, leaving often vertical cliffs on the south and east aspects owing to the more rapid headward erosion of the coastal streams, and more gentle slopes of the remnant bits to the west and north. Where the basalt cover has been completely removed, some sharp peaks still stand, formed by erosion resistant intrusive rock such as trachyte and rhyolite, solidified in the plugs and necks supplying the vulcanism.



Volcanic rock the world over breaks down to nutrient rich soils, and here they support lush rainforest on the cooler heights. Even if you are not familiar with this area, you are likely to know of O'Reilly's and Binna burra, (Lamington National

Park) and Springbrook. On more than one occasion I have walked the track from O'Reilly's to the NSW border, where you can stand at the top of the cliff which forms the border here and take in a view of the eroded country to the south, from Murwillumbah to the sharp peak of Mt Warning, the remains of a volcanic neck. The Rainforests in this area contain Antarctic Beech *Nothofagus moorei*, of an ancient genus once widespread in times before the Antarctic ice cap formed and changed Australia's climate from wet and warm to cool and dry. Also typically represented are Hoop Pine *Araucaria*, the amazing buttress rooted Figs, a large variety of broad leaved trees and shrubs, including the notorious 'stinging tree', Strangler Figs engulfing the trunks of tall trees, and understory of convoluted vines, palms, ferns, epiphytes and mosses, with rotting branches and trunks on the ground sprouting colourful fungi.

If all is quiet, you will hear scratching amongst the leaf litter on the ground well before you see the cause, which could be a lone Brush Turkey, a Satin Bowerbird, or if you are lucky, a Rufous Scrub-bird or an Eastern Whipbird. The unmistakable whip crack call is common in these forests, but sightings of the bird are not - the tall trees and heavy foliage work against easy observation.

The "Lion Road" crosses the border into NSW at Richards Gap. At a lookout stop in the forest we were surrounded by hundreds of Bell-miners, their penetrating one-note call creating quite a din. This area also yielded Lewin Honeyeaters, Pale headed Rosella, and Grey Shrike-thrush.



Overnighting at a pleasant spot called Queen Mary Falls, I was amused to see a Wonga Pigeon patrolling the park. As in many such tourist spots, there was daily bird feeding, resulting in many semi tame Rainbow Lorikeets, King Parrots and Crimson Rosella. Among the many birds noted in the area, Lewin Honeyeaters were common, as were Satin Bowerbirds and Noisy Miners. On walking tracks there were calls of Whipbirds, Treecreepers and Pardalotes, and sightings of Brown Gerygone, Yellow throated Scrubwren, Buff rumped and Striated Thornbills, Yellow Robin and Bar-shouldered Doves. Along a stretch of the track leading to the falls I found a number of Striped Greenhood Orchids.

The rainforests of the "scenic rim" could be said to represent a remnant of Gondwana, the ancient continent which saw Australia joined to Antarctica until the late Mesozoic. Today they are richly bio-diverse, containing more than 1700 species of flowering plants and 500 species of vertebrate animals. In 1994 the collection of Parks preserving the rainforests were declared a World Heritage area. They are a magnet to anyone interested in Natural History.

**Disclaimer:** The opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the contributors and not necessarily those of the club

# Castlemaine Field Naturalists Programme

## December 2010

**Fri December 10 meeting:** Members' night – Members “show and tell”. Share a few photos, a nature experience, a poem – be as creative as you like. Slide and digital projectors available for use (Powerpoint or jpegs on either CD or USB key) Bring a plate – share supper.

**Sat December 11 Christmas outing:** Tullaroop Res. Meet 3 pm at the Duke St car park, or at the site.

### 2011

**Sat January 15 Dawn Breakfast** at the Quince Tree, Pullans Road.

**Fri February 11 meeting:** A.G.M. Speaker: LAURIE LEVY

**Sat February 12 field trip:** Location to be advised

### VISITORS ARE WELCOME AT CLUB ACTIVITIES

**General meetings** - (second Friday of each month, except January) are held in the Uniting Church (UCA) Hall (enter from Lyttleton St.) at 8.00 pm.

**Field Trips** - (Saturday following the general meeting) leave from the car park opposite Castle Motel, Duke Street at 1.30pm sharp unless stated otherwise. BYO morning and/or afternoon tea. Outdoor excursions are likely to be cancelled in extreme weather conditions. There are NO excursions on total fire ban days.

**Business meetings** - fourth Thursday of each month, except December, at Denis Hurley's; 20 Merrifield St., at 7.30 pm. All members are invited to attend.

### Subscriptions for 2010

Ordinary membership: Single \$27, Family \$35

Pensioner or student: Single \$24, Family \$29

Subscription includes postage of the monthly newsletter, Castlemaine Naturalist

### 2010 Committee

|                                 |                            |                               |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|
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| Chris Timewell (vice President) |                            | 5472 1553                     |
| George Broadway (Secretary)     | georgebroadway@bigpond.com | 5472 2513                     |
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